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SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: CAMBODIA LAUNCHES NEW NATIONAL COMMITTEE TO COMBAT
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

REF: A. PHNOM PENH 744
[1](#)B. PHNOM PENH 709

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

[1](#)1. (SBU) On December 9, Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Minister of Interior Sar Kheng presided over the official launch of Cambodia's new National Committee to Suppress Human Trafficking, Smuggling, and Labor and Sexual Exploitation. Created on September 25 with a Sub-Decree signed by Prime Minister Hun Sen, the National Committee merges the former National Task Force (headquartered at the Ministry of Women's Affairs) with the High-Level Working Group (headed by the DPM at the Ministry of Interior) into a single anti-TIP policy structure. The 18-member Committee is chaired by the DPM and has as its four vice-chairs the Ministers of Justice, Labor, Social Affairs, and Women's Affairs.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Ambassador Rodley spoke at the launch, emphasizing the transnational nature of human trafficking and the fact that governments across the world, including the United States, had to work hard to combat the trafficking scourge. The Ambassador applauded positive steps taken by the RGC this year, such as the formation of the National Committee and the launch of the new National Minimum Standards on Victim Protection (Ref A), and reiterated USG commitment to helping Cambodia combat trafficking through programs and policy engagement. The Ambassador also called for stricter implementation of Cambodia's 2008 counter-trafficking law, highlighting the new National Committee's stated goal of eradicating impunity by TIP ringleaders and offenders. The Ambassador praised the show of political will by the RGC thus far, and encouraged the crowd of government officials present to keep tackling the problem head on.

[1](#)3. (SBU) DPM Sar Kheng took on board the Ambassador's remarks and, in extemporaneous remarks added to the formal tasks he outlined for the National Committee in his speech, he reiterated the RGC's commitment to strengthen all aspects of anti-TIP activities. This joint government activity conducted in such a cohesive manner would show to any would-be perpetrators that "the net is very big and very strong, from top to bottom," he said. On Cambodia's tier ranking, Sar Kheng said that the previous Tier 3 ranking showed the RGC was not committed. With the current "two and one half" ranking, the government was committed but it was "not very strong," he remarked. The formation of the National Committee was a key step in showing a strong government commitment to combating trafficking, he concluded. Sar Kheng also remarked on the formation of a new study group comprised of officials from the Ministries of Interior and Justice, which would examine why many TIP arrest cases did not proceed to prosecutions and convictions (Ref B). He made clear the government's position that more convictions against TIP crimes were needed.

14. (SBU) The Sub-Decree states that the National Committee Secretariat, which leads day-to-day anti-TIP policy efforts, is financially supported by the national budget, with a separate budgetary package within the annual budget of the Ministry of Interior. It also establishes six working groups under the Secretariat to coordinate government response to the different aspects of human trafficking, including law enforcement, judicial affairs, protection and rehabilitation, prevention, international cooperation, and children's affairs. The terms of reference for the working groups lays out their structure (septel). The remaining 13 members of the NC are the Ministers of Tourism, Health, and Education; the Commissioner General of the National Police; the Commander of the Military Police; and secretaries of state from the ministries of Interior, Defense, Foreign Affairs, Information, Economy and Finance, Culture, and Post and Telecommunications.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: The DPM's presence and comments at the launch ceremony reinforced the commitment of the RGC to combating human trafficking. The Sub-Decree and terms of reference for the working groups names the officials that sit on each group, and officially tasks them with participation in the policy structure, creating accountability within the RGC for a coordinated response. The National Committee has lost no time in consolidating and continuing anti-TIP work; work began immediately upon the Prime Minister's signature on September 25, and many of the working groups have met two or three times already to craft strategic plans and task lists. The National Committee Secretariat has assembled an Advisory Group to inform and guide the Secretariat, composed of donor officials and NGO representatives. Embassy officials have

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accepted seats on the Advisory Group and will participate in quarterly Advisory Group meetings in addition to regular engagement with RGC officials. A number of the NGO participants in the Advisory Group are also State Department or USAID grantees, reflecting the strong partnership between the RGC and USG in combating trafficking. END COMMENT.
RODLEY